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Panther Sports News

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LS-AS-BB + BB OPP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's basketball Panthers, tabbed to have their best season since the Division II tournament days of the late 1970s, will open the 1983-84 campaign Wednesday (Nov. 30).

The Panthers will host non-conference opponent Kent State at 7:30 p.m. in Lantz Gym. This is the second meeting between these two schools with Kent State winning the first encounter, 96-88, in the opener two years ago.

Eastern will quickly follow that up with a second appearance in the Fighting Illini Classic at the Assembly Hall in Champaign Friday and Saturday (Dec. 2-3).

The Panthers will face Southern Mississippi at 9 p.m. Friday night with Illinois playing Western Illinois in the first game at 7:00. Third place and Championship games will be at 7 & 9 on Saturday.

EIU is coming off a 13-18 season but won 13 of the last 19 to finish in a tie for second in the Mid-Continent with an 8-4 record.

Losing just one starter, Kevin Jones, the Panthers are pre-season picks to be among the league favorites. The official league poll of coaches, athletic directors and SIDs predicted EIU will finish second behind Illinois-Chicago. Street & Smith's publication picked Eastern to win the league and The Sporting News basketball magazine has the Panthers among the top three.

* * * * GAME NOTES * * * *

THE GAMES: Eastern Illinois University (0-0) hosts Kent State at 7:30 Wednesday, Nov. 30 in Lantz Gym; vs. Southern Mississippi at 9:00 Friday, Dec. 3 in the Illini Classic; then 3rd place or Championship game at 7 or 9 on Saturday, Dec. 4 in Assembly Hall vs. either Illinois or Western Illinois.

TENTATIVE STARTERS:

EIU

20 Jon Collins	F	6-4	So.
50 Paul Neidig	F	6-8	Jr.
00 Kevin Duckworth	C	6-11	So.
14 Troy Richardson	G	6-0	Jr.
24 Tim Wyss	G	6-5	So.

KENT STATE

32 Steve Tindall	F	6-7	So.
34 Mike McCormick	F	6-5	Fr.
54 Marvin Robinson	C	6-6	Sr.
20 Anthony Grier	G	5-10	Jr.
24 Larry Robbins	G	6-2	Jr.

-more-

SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

31 Ken Suttles	F	6-6	Sr.
32 James Williams	F	6-6	Jr.
43 Adam Simmons	C	6-8	Fr.
10 Curtis Green	G	6-1	Sr.
21 Michael Jett	G	6-5	So.

RADIO: All the action can be heard on 50,000 watt WLBH-FM Mattoon, 97 on the dial, beginning 15 minutes prior to tip-off. Marc Stuart calls the play-by-play with Dick Vaughan providing commentary.

THE SERIES: Kent State leads the series, 1-0, winning 96-88 in the opener two years ago. Only two players on this year's squad, Larry Robbins and Anthony Grier, are left over from that team and those two combined for only two points in the game.

This is the first meeting between EIU and Southern Mississippi.

THE COACHES: EIU's Rick Samuels begins his fourth season. His three year head coaching record is 43-42. He previously was an assistant at Iowa State.

Kent State's Jim McDonald enters his second year as head coach after a 15-13 first year, best at KSU since 1950-51.

SMU'S M.K. TURK, a former assistant at Memphis State, starts his eighth season as head coach. He has a 103-84 lifetime record with five winning seasons in the seven years.

EIU FACTS: The Panthers would like to open with a win after losing the previous two opening games . . . EIU not only has no seniors in the starting lineup but none on the squad . . . Kevin Duckworth is the only returning fulltime starter set to go Wednesday . . . from last year Kevin Jones has graduated, Tim Dykstra is practicing with the U.S. Olympic Team Handball squad, Doug Crook is still sidelined with a broken wrist and Dirk Androff has not reported because the football season has been extended due to the NCAA I-AA playoffs . . . two starters, Jon Collins and Troy Richardson, are new faces having transferred from Northern Illinois and North Dakota State, respectively . . . Duckworth is currently playing with a stress fracture in his leg which limits practice time but does allow him to compete in games . . . Collins made an impressive debut when he had 20 points, 10 rebounds in the exhibition 71-66 win over an Iowa AAU team . . . Tim Wyss, a sophomore guard, had 14 points and Duckworth added 11 with nine rebounds.

KSU FACTS: The Golden Flashes are a young team, also, with no seniors in the starting lineup . . . they are coming off a 15-13 season, their best in over 30 years . . . they were 9-9 and finished 6th in the league . . . Anthony Grier is a 5-10 guard who was third in the MAC in assists with a school record 156 . . . 6-2 guard Larry Robbins was second on the team in scoring with a 12.2 average . . . 6-6 Marvin Robinson averaged 7.4 rebounds . . . last week the Golden Flashes defeated a Yugoslavian team by over 30 points, and likely will come into Lantz with a 2-0 record by playing Saginaw Valley and Wittenberg prior to the EIU game.

SMU FACTS: The Eagles lost three starters from last year's 14-14 record and sixth place finish in the Metro Conference . . . returning, though, is 6-1 senior guard Curtis Green, a second team All-Metro choice who led the team with 16.7 scoring average and 58 steals . . . he has 1064 career points, and was the MVP of the prestigious IPTAY Tournament at Clemson . . . former Mississippi prep 'player of the year' James Williams, a 6-6 junior, returned from an early season ankle injury to lead the team in shooting (57.9%), and third in scoring (9.6) and rebounding (3.6) . . . last year this team defeated Western Illinois twice, 85-69 and 70-62.

SAMUELS SAYS: "I was impressed with our enthusiasm and intensity in the exhibition win the other night . . . even more I liked the way we did not give up once we were behind, and I'm confident that will carry over into the season. We still need to iron out a few things with the offense and have to cut down on turnovers . . . 24 is way too many."

MORE SAMUELS: "We wanted to beef up our preseason schedule to prepare us for the conference race, and opening with Kent State and the Illini Classic will be good tests. Kent State is very strong at guard with Grier and Robbins and those two should challenge our defensive capabilities. Plus, Kent State will have played a few games so that that's to their advantage. Playing in the Illini Classic is a boost to our program and we're looking forward to this opportunity. Southern Mississippi has great athletes, particularly Curtis Green, who we will have to keep under control. Playing on a neutral court will also give us a good idea of our progress here early in the season."